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WEBSITES/BLOGS

Anarchy.org.au
Your online source for Anarchy in Australia. Currently administered by the Melbourne Anarchist Club.

Disaccords.wordpress.com
An anarchist news blotter following events in Australia & Indonesia (& other nearby places). Email noisland@riseup.net with links & recommendations.

With Sober Senses
withsobersenses.wordpress.com
Fault Lines of Capital Accumulation & Front Lines of Class Struggle. 'A new project in which I am trying to reorientate my research and writing towards mapping out the territory of capital accumulation within Australia... [which] may be useful for those trying to understand and change the society they live in and make up.'

The Golden Barley School
goldenbarleyschool.wordpress.com
An anarchist, a communist and a feminist walk into a bar...A group blog, which, despite the tagline, is not run by three people with defined and separated political identities.

Slackbastard
slackbastard.anarchobase.com
Anarchy and apathy battle it out on @ndy's blog.

Wayward Wobbly
waywardwobbly.wordpress.com
Wobbly explorations into class composition.

Revolts Now
revoltsnow.wordpress.com
'A multitude of possibilities'.

PUBLICATIONS

Avenue
unnamedavenue.org
Zine of Perth anarchist collective, three issues available. Contact avenue.perth@gmail.com

The Wolves at the door
http://wolvesatthedoor.noblogs.org/
Irregular anarchist journal from Sydney. 2 issues available. Contact thewolvesatthedoor@riseup.net.

Black Light
http://anarchy.org.au/anarchist-texts/black_light_1/
Paper of the Melbourne Anarchist Club. Issue #1 'Anarchy and organisation' is now available. Contact blacklightzine@gmail.com.

Sedition
http://anarchy.org.au/sedition/
Sedition is a mutual collaboration between two Australian anarchist collectives; Melbourne Anarchist Club and the Jura collective from Sydney. Issue #2 forthcoming. Contact: seditionjournal@gmail.com.

MUTINY

A PAPER OF ANARCHISTIC IDEAS AND ACTION

ISSUE 68 NOV/DEC

DON'T TALK TO THE COPS

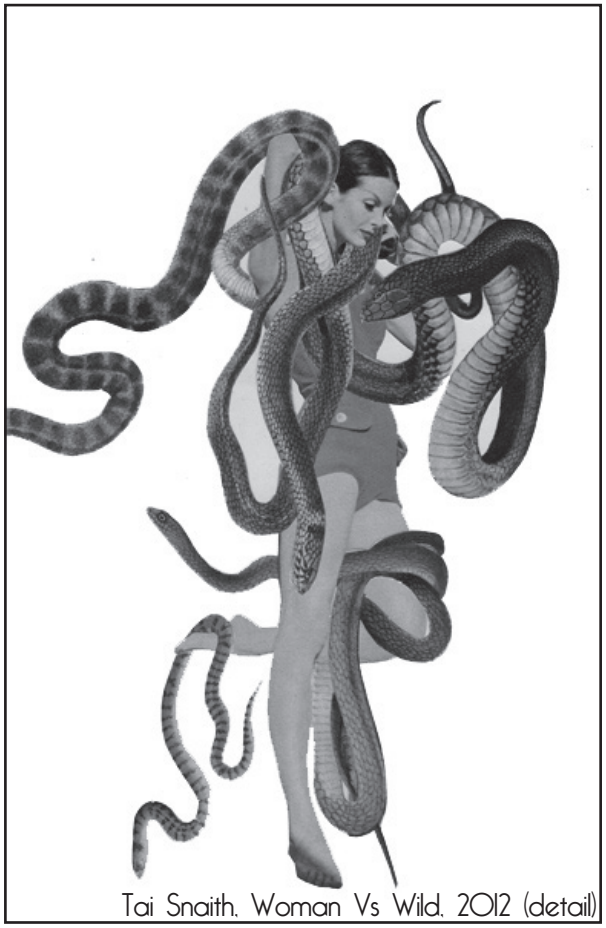
THE SILENCING OF DISSENT AT LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

GLOBAL REVOLT AND THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY

FEMINISM AND THE PROBLEM OF SOLIDARITY

HOBBIT HYSTERIA

REVIEWS: LIES JOURNAL, FEMINAGE EXHIBITION



Tai Snaith, Woman Vs Wild, 2012 (detail)

FREE

In this edition of Mutiny we bring you articles and reviews about feminist art and writing, feminism and the problem of the global solidarity, dealing with state repression, the struggle over expulsions and cuts at La Trobe University, the film of the Hobbit and the way that contemporary radical movements have organised around the idea of 'democracy'.

Blanka's review of the Feminage exhibit suggests that the struggle for a better world involves an understanding of the history of radical thought in the art world and what we can learn from it, and highlights how particular cultural forms can be subversive. However, in looking at the art world and other areas, there is a danger in seeing the goal of feminism as being one in which fame, riches or even opportunities are able to be accessed equally by men and women. As Princess Mob writes in her review of the new 'LIES' journal, there is also a 'rich history of feminism as a complex movement and a heterogeneous body of thought trying to get to the root of things'.

This issue of 'conflicting feminisms' is posed in a different way in Tanya's article on 'Feminism and the Problem of Solidarity'. She critiques the way in which a feminist focus on a 'spectacle of distant suffering' in the Global South obscures violence against women in 'the West', denies agency to women and props up racial myths. Instead she suggests that a feminist politics can try and avoid moral righteousness, and engage in the risky and complex process of political struggle, across divisions of race, class, nation and religion.

As editors we have recently struggled to find these sorts of articles about 'gender'. As such, we particularly welcome this content. We want to publish more around feminism and gender in future zines, without adopting a 'tick the boxes' approach where we ask ourselves, "do we have a contribution about race/sexuality/gender/ability/pick-an-identity for this issue?" Such an approach values the topic of an article over its substance, and risks reducing analysis to 'single issues' rather than looking at things in their totality. If you have ideas for articles, let us know!

With love and solidarity,

Mutiny zine editors (Blackbeard, L Dog, Dumpstered Twin, Syzygy)

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Back issues: jura.org.au/mutiny

It may interest Sydney-based readers to know that **the Black Rose Anarchist Space at 22 Enmore Road, Newtown has re-opened.** Available now: books, sitting area, coffee available by donation and internet.

There will be events and gigs (cinema nights, bands, jam sessions; book club already running weekly) at the original Newtown location - this time, the shop front (no more long dangly hallway to walk down). And of course if you would like to use the space for anything in line with anti-authoritarian politics, please do call.

For more info:
0452 481 696
blackrosebooks@yahoo.com.au

Image: Sally Smart, Argument (In Her Nature), 2011. From Feminage *exhibition.*

And how it can be undone? *LIES* is part of that movement: deep and sharp and complicated.

Reading it, I was reminded of feminist memoirs I've read that describe the moment when you read something that seems to recognise you, the moment when someone else gives you the words for your inchoate feelings. It's the only thing I've read for a long time that speaks to me of both the everyday reality of living in this world and of being part of struggles to change it. That is, of living with the sometimes-clashing identifications of 'woman' and 'anarchist', of having a double-vision that is both difficult and essential. Or, rather, it's the first thing I've read that makes sense of this other than zines written by my friends.

So I feel like *LIES* was written by friends. It creates an 'us', a shared feeling. The editorial note says: "*Everything we write will be used against us.* Every claim on or lament against society that we write will be received in the same way as accounts of rape - as lies. We don't care anymore." To stop caring is to turn around and start talking to those beside you, to have a conversation with those who aren't accusing you of lying, to accept but refuse shame and marginality and see where you can go from there.

LIES is a collection of essays, poetry, letters and communiques old and new. There are texts that deal with gendered and racialised fault-lines within movements from Occupy Baltimore to Oaxaca. There are pieces that recover history: feminist communiques on prostitution and the state from 1977, and Suzan Cooke's reflections on her experience as a trans woman in 60s radical movements. There's a love letter that says "To be a feminist is to be a paranoid. Everyone tells us that we are reading into things too much, that what we are seeing isn't there."

'Undoing Sex: Against Sexual Optimism' is a thoughtful and moving essay critiquing the idea that there's an essential goodness to sex, arguing that if this belief was once radical, it's now institutional, and that it exists in strategic contrast to the shame and violence that work to enforce gender. The essay is a tour through a certain history of radical feminist thought, not to dismiss it or return to it, but to learn from its development and mix it up with recent theories on the construction and abolition of gender.

'Caring: A Labor of Stolen Time' is a story about (mostly female, mostly migrant) workers organising in an aged care home, and about how capitalism treats people who are no longer productive. It's about relationships: about workers' struggle to treat residents with empathy and humanity even under intense work pressure, about the mutual aid of workers supporting each other in small ways and how these relationships enabled organsing. Jomo writes: "We can only truly succeed if we are also transformed into human beings who are good to one another."

liesjournal.info

jarring perceptions and opening new possibilities.

This practice continues a radical lineage or 'red thread' from the creations of Hannah Höch, who in the 1920s boldly examined the equivocal status of women in Germany, and reinvented the everyday in a social and artistic sense. Höch has been acknowledged as the originator of the photo-collage technique, the foundation of what's more recently been known as "culture jamming". As in Höch's work, the works in the show achieve a reversal of perspective, where in the words of Sydney art historian Catriona Moore, "the idea of woman as object (but not subject) of the media gaze is…registered and destabilised". This exhibition is part of steps towards a National Feminist Art Show proposed for 2015.

> "To reverse perspective is to stop seeing things through the eyes of the community, of ideology, of the family, of other people. To grasp hold of oneself as something solid, to take oneself as starting point and centre… If we do not reverse perspective, Power's perspective will succeed in turning us against ourselves once and for all." – Raoul Vaneigem, *The Revolution of everyday life.*

LIES: A Journal of Materialist Feminism

By Princess Mob

LIES: A Journal of Materialist Feminism is a new feminist journal from North America. It's the first contemporary political writing I've read for a long time that feels *vital*.

Misogyny is back. It never went away as a force, but it's back as a topic of conversation, an issue that political groupings, from the major parties to the sects of the left, debate in order to differentiate themselves. Yet while anarchists and the far left generally say that they want to oppose sexism and any form of hierarchy, they often distance themselves from feminism. Feminism is caricatured as either anything-goes liberalism concerned with individual advancement or outdated puritanical essentialism. Either way, it's dismissed as a marginal single-issue campaign with no analysis of, say, class or race.

Anarchist attempts to deal with sexism tend to either restate 'it's really all about class', or see it simply as a matter of interpersonal bad behaviour that, whether it's men talking over women in meetings or raping them, can be solved by essentially getting men to have better manners. I'm exaggerating, perhaps: things are said that are better than silence. But there's a certain grinding weariness that comes when all our conversations seem to just repeat our complaints until they become boring even to us, with no sense that anything will ever change.

But there's a rich history of feminism as a complex movement and a heterogeneous body of thought trying to get to the root of things: How do the gendered divisions of power and safety and labour persist and reproduce? How does this work as part of racialised class society?

Hobbit hysteria

- Fydd

The recent release of the first film of The Hobbit trilogy has created an alarming hullabaloo in New Zealand. Happily, we were out of the country when Hobbit fever hit, but, drat it, we didn't manage to escape it on our return a few weeks later. After getting on the plane, Air New Zealand showed a smug safety video based on the Hobbit. As we left the plane at Wellington airport, we were greeted by a garish, grotesque Hobbit mural down the sides of the airbridge. Arriving in the terminal, a 12 metre sculpture of Gollum menaced us from the roof. Even the top of the conveyer belt at baggage claim was decorated with scenes from Hobbiton.

On the bus home, we passed by a giant Gandalf statue protruding from the theatre where the world premiere of the Hobbit was held a few weeks earlier. Possibly about 100,000 people had lined Courtenay Place for the premiere. This was an extraordinary number, as Wellington only has a population of about 400,000. Both 'public' and commercial organisations had gone to extraordinary lengths to offer free advertising for the film. The Wellington City Council – currently imposing austerity cuts – forked out over a million dollars to host the premiere, and to launch a campaign that proclaimed Wellington was 'the middle of Middle Earth' (they even put up banners on streets proclaiming so). An Air New Zealand plane emblazoned with Hobbit advertising performed a low fly-by during the premiere. New Zealand Post issued hobbit stamps, stamped mail destined for overseas with 'Middle Earth' instead of 'New Zealand', and even issued Gandalf and Bilbo coins which apparently are legal tender. The list goes on …

It was like we were either having a bad surreal dream, or had entered some tacky tinpot tourist dystopia which had been clumsily and smugly rebranded as Middle Earth (as Tourism New Zealand has actually done – their cringeworthy slogan is that New Zealand is '100% Middle Earth, 100% pure New Zealand' and that the 'fantasy of Middle Earth is the reality of New Zealand') In this short piece, I will briefly look at a few events Australians and others outside New Zealand might be unaware of, especially the ugly and tragic saga of the making of the Hobbit.

Epic Pooh

In the Hobbit and the Lord of the Rings, J.R.R. Tolkien – a conservative and a Catholic -- offers an idealised, romanticised picture of rural, pre-industrial England (namely, The Shire and the Hobbits) where content little hobbits could live happily ever after. Yet, their peaceful little patch of earth is being threatened by the rise of mysterious forces and creatures from the east. One sturdy and reserved little hobbit is reluctantly drawn into a quest with a wizard and some swarthy dwarves and their dwarf king (in the film, the dwarves are portrayed as Scottish and Irish) to wage a glorious reign of death on the inherently evil, wicked creatures of the east.

(As an aside, many other interpretations of the Hobbit can be offered. For example, it's remarkable that only one woman appeared in the whole film, and she, Cate Blanchett as elf queen Galadriel, is bizarrely portrayed as glowing and ethereal. Michael Moorcock once slated Tolkien's work as 'epic pooh', that is, it is 'Winnie the Pooh posing as an epic'. China Mieville cuttingly wrote 'Tolkien is the wen on the arse of fantasy literature… there's a lot to dislike - his cod-Wagnerian pomposity, his boys-own-adventure glorying in war, his small-minded and reactionary love for hierarchical status-quos, his belief in absolute morality that blurs moral and political complexity.' Perhaps my favourite interpretation comes from Ishay Landa who argued in Historical Materialism that

Middle Earth is Tolkien's alarmist response to 'the crisis of capitalist property relations at the beginning of the twentieth century culminating in the First World War' and the Russian revolution. He sees the goblins/orcs as proles who embody 'Tolkien's underlying terror at the prospect of revolution'. As John Molyneux has written, this reading seems 'forced and unconvincing' but nonetheless it is somewhat intriguing.)

The Battle of the Hobbit

In Tolkien's fantasy world, there is no class struggle. Unfortunately for Tolkien, Hollywood, Warner Brothers (the financiers of the film), and 'Sir' Peter Jackson, such conflict actually exists. It raised its ugly head during the making of the film, even delaying its production for a month or so.

The saga commenced in late 2010, before the Hobbit had gone into production. Warner Brothers offered contracts to New Zealand actors for working on the Hobbit which undercut many previous industry wide conditions, and did not offer the same benefits as actors outside New Zealand. The NZ Actors' union, NZ Actors' Equity, an autonomous union which is part of the broader Australasian Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA), then attempted to enter negotiations about these contracts, with the aim of attempting to secure a collectively bargained employment agreement, and to win some of the cut back conditions. After Warners refused to talk, the actors union passed a resolution calling on all actors part of the International Federation of Actors to 'wait before accepting any engagement on the production of The Hobbit until the production has advised whether it will enter into good faith negotiations with NZ Actors' Equity with respect to the minimum conditions of engagement under which NZ Actors' Equity will recommend performers work on the production The Hobbit' (see Kelly, http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/HL1104/S00081/helen-kelly-the-hobbit-dispute.htm).

The response from the film industry was astounding. Accusations flew, emotional pleas were made by Jackson in the media worthy of someone who feared losing his precious, threats were made that the film would not be made in New Zealand (ie. capital flight), public slating of actors who spoke out occurred, as well as a disturbing wave of nationalism. The low point was a couple of anti-union 'save the Hobbit' marches in Wellington by hundreds and hundreds of film technicians (drummed up and supported by the owner of Weta Workshops, 'Sir' Richard Taylor – Weta workshops are the special effects and prop company for Jackson's films), in which protesters held signs such as 'film actors are killing our industry'. The techies even besieged an Actors' Equity meeting, which was cancelled as a result. Some fans posted photos on the internet that they would 'work for food' on the Hobbit.

The result was that Actors' Equity lifted their international blacking of the film, and the film went ahead and was shot. What's worse is that the NZ government, in a classic example of how the state is a fundamental support for capital accumulation (and vice versa), made sure that filming the Hobbit in New Zealand was retained after offering Warners a massive multi-million dollar subsidy, new employment legislation that odiously ensures all film workers are permanently 'self-employed' contractors rather than employees (thus individualising film workers, stopping them from collective bargaining, making collective organising difficult, and cutting workers out of holidays, sick days, and accident compensation), and enacting various legislation to enclose the digital commons and stop downloading of copyrighted material.

Despite the overwhelming defeat of the actors, a few minor positive things resulted. For example, the dispute has led to a general questioning of the extremity of the NZ government's actions, many have become sick of the tacky commodification

Reviews

Feminage: life through the eyes of women

By Blanka

The recent exhibition *Feminage* at Cross Arts Projects in King's Cross presented an array of artworks in collage as a dynamic element of feminist art practice. The works spanned a period of thirty years of feminist art, including the present day, each artist creating images of or about women as a 'body politic', a site of resistance. The show took place in a context where, in most of the world's rich countries, women artists occupy only 20 per cent of the walls of art galleries and museums.

A lively forum on feminist art was held in conjunction with the show. The discussion traced the social and institutional barriers that place women on an extremely unequal footing when it comes to working as artists, and the feminist challenge to these barriers. In this process of challenge, feminists invented a new language of ideas which have vastly impacted on art as a whole. For instance, as one speaker noted, it was feminism that brought marxism and psychology together, to articulate both the inner life and material reality of women's experience. Other elements of this language include an attention to themes of intimacy, and an unmistakeable humour. Finally, there is a questioning of representation itself, and the 'male gaze' – or: how is the act of looking embedded in power relations? It was noted that these elements are used widely by artists today, without any recognition of the source. The lack of knowledge about the history of women's art in the past allows the plunder of ideas in the present. This is not helped by the fact that notions of originality and 'genius' are strongly marked as male attributes. How often are the words brilliance or genius ever used in reference to women?

In the 1970s, women artists drew on feminism and gay rights to develop a logic of collage. The small, often violent encounters of family life, work, immigration, welfare and religion, prompted a resurgence in collage art forms, as a process of cutting-and-pasting together of new forms of identity and alternative ways of being in the world. Today when media mash-ups, morphing and online surfing are familiar cultural processes, the contemporary artists in *Feminage* plied the classical approach to the technique, adopting collage as a radical verb, revealing its enduring ability to fragment and recombine;

company. It sells products. And it reserves the right to refuse service to difficult customers.

Public space, free speech, and open debate: these are the founding myths of liberal democracy. The subversion of liberalism is in full effect, but never will these myths be discarded (short of a genuine political crisis, which we have yet to see in Australia). Rather, democracy is being suspended as a series of exceptional situations: the emergency in the Northern Territory, the immigration crisis, the financial crisis, et cetera. And this is clearly how John Dewar is framing the matter when he describes the La Trobe protests as a case of free speech "taken too far." The University will not openly discard the rhetoric of open debate; but it will show how exceptional these circumstances are. In the same way, the University has not declared its contempt for the intrinsic value of the Humanities; it simply seeks to balance this value against provision of quality, fiscal responsibility, and other nice-sounding names for the imperative towards accumulation.

While I see the actions of the students at La Trobe as an ultimately futile gesture, I think it is in some ways a necessary one. It is important to mark the passing of the liberal university. The protests are, in this way, something of an act of mourning, and despite the flaws of liberal democracy I don't think it reactionary to mourn its passing. Standing as they do for the last believers in debate on campus, there is even something heroic in the doomed stance of the three accused at La Trobe. But when it is all finished, the dust has settled, the punishments meted out, and the last statements of defiance read from the rooftops, perhaps we can turn ourselves to a new and urgent task. Australian society is headed down a road to increasingly technocratic and authoritarian governance; struggles like these bear witness to the fact. Furthermore, the failure of the NTEU to resist its own casualisation and disempowerment shows how casualisation has fragmented workers' power, something the left has relied on for so long, and as programs of cuts continue to slash through university departments we can expect this trend to continue. Under these conditions, we must re-examine both the function of the university in society. Education no longer offers us a refuge from the cold realities of the labour market, but is instead an act of reproduction for which we are increasingly forced to bear the costs. And we are not being produced as free thinkers or free spirits, but as technicians and immaterial assembly workers. To be educated today is to be alienated and exploited. To be employed in education is to live in constant precarity (no wonder so many academics at La Trobe eventually opted for voluntary redundancy packages – how else would they ever afford a holiday?). In the years to come, politics on campuses must come to grips with these realities; resistance must morph from the defense of education, which is now nothing but the defense of commodity relations, to the assault on the conditions of alienation. Our thirst for knowledge now has nothing whatsoever to do with the university; the only redeeming feature of study is now our boredom.

surrounding the Hobbit, and the hero worship of Peter Jackson has taken a big dint.

What does this all mean? In many respects, it's not so shocking or sickening, as I have portrayed above. The battle of the Hobbit illustrates the enormous power of the spectacle, which is still an integral part of modern capitalism. Further, it's standard Hollywood practice internationally to twist governments' arms to secure subsidies, and reduce working conditions. And the film industry is notorious internationally for being based on the hyper-exploitation of a precarious and often low-paid workforce who work extremely long hours for intense spells, and then are out of work for long periods. It's sad but not surprising that during an international depression, and in New Zealand at least a very low level of class struggle and solidarity, that many unemployed film techies were desperate for jobs, and many (but not all) went out and actively hobbled the actors' dispute. And it shows the difficulties of a small bunch of 600 actors taking on a mobile and massively capital intensive industry. However, there is plenty of scope for criticism of the role of unions, too: their overestimation of their power, their lack of attempts to build solidarity with film technicians, and their apparent belief that only an effective PR campaign is needed to win a struggle rather than grassroots activity and self-organisation. Overall, it is fitting that a brutal fantasy which (unsurprisingly) upholds the status quo ended up, by suppressing a nascent actor's revolt, doing the same thing in reality.

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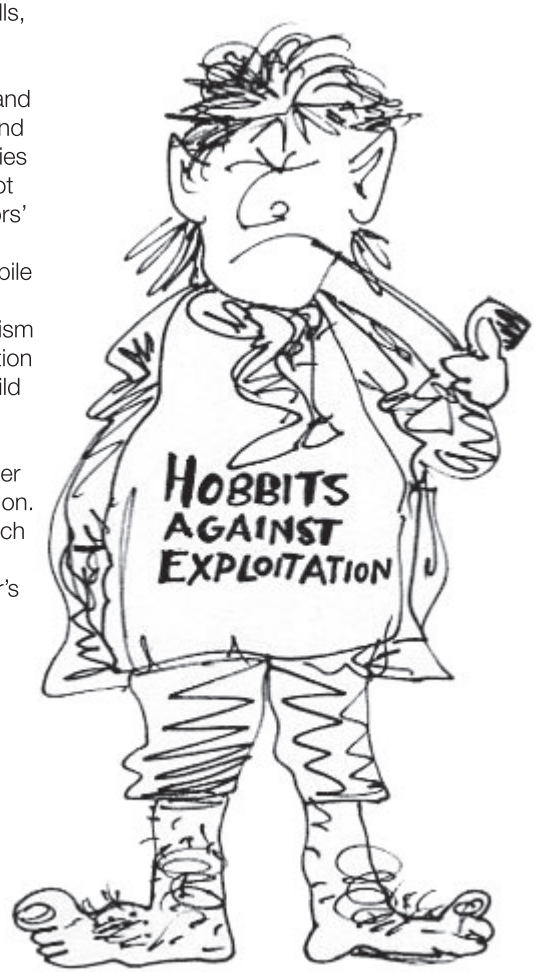


The Spectacle of Distant Suffering: Feminism and the Problem of Solidarity

By Tanya

'As North American feminists engage with representations of human rights violations against women across the globe, many of these based on third-hand accounts, we need to be mindful of how rhetorical acts of witnessing may function as new forms of international tourism and appropriation.'

The quote above was written by feminist academic Wendy Hesford in a discussion of North American feminists' responses to rape during the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. The International Criminal Tribunal (ICTY) in Yugoslavia was the first time that 'widespread and systemic' rape during war was treated as a crime against humanity in international law, and so represents an important step forward in international recognition of violence against women. Such recognition did not, of course, occur spontaneously, but was the result of concerted campaigning both within the region and by international supporters, including the North American feminists of whom Hesford speaks. The aftermath of the conflict, and of the landmark decisions regarding rape by the ICTY has seen Western feminist and human rights activists continue to visit the former Yugoslavia with the aim of witnessing and speaking out about what is universally agreed to be a horrific program of ethnic cleansing involving widespread sexual violence, including the existence of infamous 'rape camps' where large numbers of women were repeatedly raped and tortured.

It therefore can, and is often, seen as an important victory and an important site of international solidarity and feminist witnessing. However, Hesford is one among a number of feminists and other critics who have drawn attention to problems with the ways in which the West, and Western feminists, have engaged with the violence. The images of raped women were used not only in relation to the ICTY but as part of the justification for the NATO military intervention, an intervention that remains controversial due to the large number of casualties resulting from widespread aerial bombing. Hesford also argues that a more subtle but equally problematic dynamic of international power is at play where Western feminist and human rights activists continue to be fascinated by what she terms 'the spectacle of distant suffering', in this case, the spectacle of raped women. Beverley Allen, another researcher, has interviewed women across the former Yugoslavia and writes of hearing the same reports from numerous villages of film crews, NGOs and researchers arriving looking for women to speak about being raped. These individuals were indifferent to reports of other abuses or deprivation such as inadequate drinking water. Also, according to Allen and Hesford's informants, these people were also strikingly indifferent to women's attempts to speak of their resistance or activism in the aftermath of the conflict, only wanting images and narratives of victimisation.

La Trobe University has gone the way of all universities worldwide: it has become a corporation. While formally a public institution, it has been subjected to market cycles by a reduction of public funding. Forced to rely increasingly on tuition to fund itself, the university has adopted the logic of any other producer of commodities. Like any other factory, the degree factory can only produce things that will sell. So rather than dismissing the University's financial case as a simple lie to justify greed, the protestors ought to read the more disturbing truths it reveals. Students are not enrolling in Humanities to the same extent that they are seeking out professional degrees, business or finance qualifications, or degrees in the hard sciences that lead to employment in industry. Why would they? The social conditions that once promised a future to the humanities major, including plenty of funding for public services and low property prices, have vanished. Before the social movements of the 50s and 60s, the humanities existed to sharpen the thinking of managers and leaders. For a brief period they existed as a concession wrought from capital. Now, they are simply a commodity which doesn't sell. And such a commodity cannot exist for long. John Dewar was hired to rationalise a production process, not to safeguard a place of learning.

The moral case of the protestors relies on a certain vision of the university as an open forum of debate and inquiry; it is this case that they put forward in defense of both the Humanities and the protestors. But that vision exists in only two places: in the minds of the protestors and in the marketing literature of the university. Their case is as hopeless as an attempt to sue the makers of Lynx body spray for one's failure to entice a series of beautiful and adventurous female partners (and I have yet to find a lawyer who will take my case). But that narrative is starting to fade even from the university's promises; more and more of the advertising for university courses appeals to prospective students' hopes of future employment. It seems that the protestors are part of a quickly shrinking minority that believes in these liberal ideals, despite their professed radicalism. Hence when John Dewar publicly declares his love for education, he's not being a hypocrite: he's a good company man.

Free and open inquiry is not only the campaign's moral case. With the threat of disciplinary action, it is now to be their legal case. In the upcoming hearings against the accused, the protestors intend to argue that their actions are protected under the Victorian Charter of Human Rights, which protects political speech in a public space. This argument was successfully used to defend the Max Brenner 19, who were brought to court last year for their militant protests against the coffee chain's support of the Israeli military. It is possible that a state court might uphold the case, but the University is treating the matter as an internal administrative affair. And here we can expect that the University will make use of at least one aspect of academic tradition: the authoritarian hierarchy which the Western university has inherited from its founder, the Catholic church. Its very decision to handle the matter internally shows that the University does not consider itself a public institution. It is a private

Farewell to the Public Sphere: the Silencing of Dissent at La Trobe University

James Pollard

As the machine of capitalist accumulation grinds grimly on, students at La Trobe are preparing their last stand in defense of the idea of the university. At La Trobe's open day last year, students organised as the Stop the HUSS Cuts Collective notoriously went toe to toe with campus security as they stormed a building during a demonstration against cuts to La Trobe's humanities program. In retaliation for their insolence, the University has issued disciplinary charges against three students who allegedly led the wild mob in their desecration of the campus, and apparent assault against security guards. The campaigners are attempting to draw attention to the treatment of these three, and the University's violation of students' rights to free speech. The stance of the students faced with expulsion has an element of tragedy to it, for the campaign is desperately attempting to save the supposed inner purpose of the university from the actions of a University which no longer has the slightest commitment to such ideals.

The narrative of the protestors goes something like this: the humanities, sacred home of critical inquiry, are being gutted. The University has no interest in critical inquiry, and it isn't making any money. The students that stood up against the cuts were practicing the finest sort of critical inquiry: the kind that leads to critical action. The University revealed, then, that it didn't just disregard critical inquiry, it has an active and poisonous contempt for it. Therefore, those identified as ringleaders are to be ceremonially executed/expelled for failing to get with the program. Why this assault on critical inquiry? So that the money that would have been spent employing teachers and researchers in the humanities can instead be dumped into a swimming pool for Vice-Chancellor John Dewar to dive into while he laughs maniacally.

The Vice-Chancellor assumes a place of particular contempt in this tale. It was the Vice-Chancellor who famously fled from the open day demonstrators through an underground tunnel. (You couldn't make this shit up.) It was the Vice-Chancellor who demanded the cuts, having recently come from doing similar work as the Provost of Melbourne University who pushed through the infamous Melbourne Model. It is the Vice-Chancellor who keeps screening his calls to make sure he doesn't have to talk to his critics. And of course it is the Vice-Chancellor who draws a six-figure salary while mournfully informing the public that there simply isn't enough money to keep the Humanities afloat. To the protestors, Vice-Chancellor Dewar is a money-hungry two-faced soulless hypocrite. But this begs the question, how did such a maniac come to be Vice-Chancellor in the first place?

Karla Dickens, On the eighth day

The issues raised by Western responses to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia resonate with other contemporary cases where the spectacle of non-Western women's suffering has been used variously as justification for military intervention, as when Laura Bush called for 'a world-wide effort to focus on the brutality against women and children by the al-Qaida terrorist network and the regime it supports in Afghanistan, the Taliban'. This effort was, in effect, a military occupation of Afghanistan by Western powers. Such a response was seen closer to home when the spectre of violence against women and children in remote Indigenous communities was used as a justification for the ongoing Intervention in the Northern Territory. Additionally, Western governments have increasingly used 'sexism', symbolised in the western imagination by the *hijab* as an excuse to disenfranchise and marginalise Islamic communities.

All of these examples share important features. When we allow ourselves to become fascinated by these spectacles of distant suffering and the fantasies of ourselves as saviours, Western feminists deflect their attention away from violence and oppression in their own societies, instead locating misogyny as something that happens in the barbaric countries of the Global South while simultaneously denying the possibility for non-Western women to act on their own accord, reliant on their more enlightened and emancipated 'sisters' for rescue. In so doing, we participate in an ongoing tendency in Western colonial and neo-colonial relations with the Global South.

Colonial History

The history of imperialism is not simply one of national power, militarism and racism. It is deeply imbued with the politics of gender, demonstrating that gender, race, and ideas of progress and civilisation have been, and continue to be, deeply enmeshed. The figure of the suffering woman requiring rescue, or the damsel in distress, is almost ubiquitous in Western culture, and ideologies of women needing to be protected have historically been used to justify everything from women's exclusion from paid employment to denying women the right to vote. But this figure also has a heavily racial dynamic and the history of Western colonialism is deeply imbued with what postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak has described as the fantasy that "white men are saving brown women from brown men". This fantasy is both a racialised version of patriarchal chivalry and a gendered variant of the 'white man's (self-imposed) burden' to transmit his superior civilisation to the rest of the world. As a fantasy, it has been used both as a rationale for the superiority of Western civilisation and the imposition and intensification of colonial rule in the

global south.

Spivak originally described this fantasy in reference to colonial responses to the practice of *sati* or widow burning in India. In this fantasy, the allegedly superior treatment of women in European nations was used as evidence that Western nations were more civilised and that forcibly imposing this civilisation on others was justified by the need to save brown women. In India, the need to eradicate *sati* was used by the British in India as justification for moving their military presence out of the cities and into the countryside and for the intensification of paramilitary and military policing of the population. Importantly, Spivak's argument is not a defence of sati but a critique of the ways that the British colonisers responded to it.

What Spivak noted about this fantasy is that it requires brown women to exist as a passive object of pity and rescue, without agency and outside of historical change. Put simply, if the Indian woman ceases to suffer, or acts on her own behalf, the fantasy, and its utility for the project of imperialism, falls apart. Secondly, women not only functions as objects of pity but in their objectified status they provide evidence of the superiority of Western culture, which is defined, in contrast, as a culture where women are protected and relatively liberated. By this logic, white women are also protected by and indebted to white men as they are saved from being reduced to the same condition as their suffering sisters. An even more direct extension of this logic is found in the colonial myth of black men as innately sexually violent, with a particular desire to victimise white women. This myth, built on the same foundations of civilizational superiority as the fantasy discussed by Spivak, has been used to justify acts of violence and policing of communities of colour, perhaps most infamously the widespread lynching of African-American men in the south of the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

This politics of gender, protection and violence works to create a border between the civilised West defined by gender equality and the unenlightened non-West defined through the victimisation of women. This border, and the fantasy that helps to animate it, continues to be reproduced in the gendered politics of neo-colonialism in the opening decades of the twenty-first century. When Western governments ban the *hijab* they also claim to be saving brown women from brown men as did John Howard and Mal Brough in the Northern Territory. When Laura Bush called on the world to intervene in Afghanistan she also mobilised this fantasy. As she said, intervention was required "not only because our hearts break for the women and children in Afghanistan, but also because in Afghanistan we see the world the terrorists would like to impose on the rest of us." Her speech, delivered just before Thanksgiving, also exhorted Americans to give thanks that they lived in a society with gender equality and freedom for women. The results of these contemporary manifestations remain the same as those analysed by Spivak. The continuing militarist and masculine politics of Western nations are justified as necessary to protect women from barbarism while the violence of men against women in the West is normalised, erased and denied.

breadth of global revolt is a serious challenge to political and financial elites. It involves rising anger at governments, political parties, banks and the rich, a revolt against dictatorship – against oligarchs, oppressive military regimes, the rule of the market and the dictatorship of capital – and a widespread recognition that the mounting crises for which they are responsible require democratic responses. Yet, the reaction from elites has mainly involved attempts to curtail democracy while escalating attacks on those who are struggling to defend and create it. Since the start of the financial crisis it has been clear the ruling class considers there is an excess of democracy and wishes to restrain it. Existing representative institutions are considered too democratic and we see a growing crisis of administration through electoral bodies, along with the appointment of agents of finance capital to positions of state power, while decisions favouring the elite are made elsewhere, often in secret, as government itself is gradually privatised. The ideological facades that defend corporations and corporatised state forms are being exposed and the ruling class is being left with little more than the exercise of force to defend itself, further demonstrating the nature of violently oppressive regimes that should be demolished. This is why revolts erupting across the globe have included mutinies against security and surveillance states, against the power of the military and police, against unending war, against the militarisation of society, police repression, and the expanding of security regimes.

Although civil war, counter-revolutionary violence and social crisis continue, military juntas remain in power and the struggles for social dignity that brought people into the streets have not been won, the desires for democracy that have been unleashed by the Arab Spring, anti-austerity and Occupy movements, and the resulting manifestations of alternative society and sociability, will not end. Recent setbacks and failures shouldn't prevent us from appreciating how democratic movements continue to develop practices and strategies that can avoid, bypass and challenge dictatorship and authoritarianism. Movements of revolt have demonstrated they can disrupt the power of the ruling class and challenge the established order.

This paper is not meant to deny the obstacles to, or complexities of, the struggles for democracy. Instead I have considered some of the ways democratic struggles, desires and experiments have helped to more deeply connect those in revolt and how the collaborative creation of democratic times, spaces, practices and processes have demonstrated the possibilities of mutual aid, socialisation and community, autonomous of capital and its state forms. Of course, the struggles for democracy will be very long. In fact they will take the rest of our days. If we want rich and rewarding lives, authentic and loving relationships, decent work and living conditions, sustainable development and environmental protection, these are things we need to create and recreate every day. It is when we stop looking to those who hold power over us for solutions, and start to create those solutions ourselves, that democracy is understood not just as a goal to be struggled for, but as the immanent ability of people to self-organise and govern themselves. However, it remains unclear if recent collaborative struggles can maintain their multiplicity of organisational forms and extend participatory democracy. Questions now facing those in revolt are; can the spaces, times and experimental practices of real democracy be widened and extended? Are new subjectivities, capable of genuine democratic relations, creating the practices, processes, infrastructures or institutions that can sustain and expand a long-term global revolution?

creating a base that is loving and supportive". The activists interviewed in her book Horizontalism consider this new politics to be a process of learning to respect others and themselves, while resisting, managing and demolishing internal and external authoritarian and hierarchical subjectivities (subjectivities are people's personal views, so something like sexism could be an 'authoritarian subjectivity' – eds). This politics is centred on "the creation of loving and trusting spaces" where direct democracy fosters a collective agency which "changes the sense of the individual and the sense of the collective". Similarly, when considering the Occupy movement, Rebecca Solnit explains; "Nothing has been more moving to me than [the] desire, realised imperfectly but repeatedly, to connect across differences, to be a community, to make a better world, to embrace each other. This desire is what lies behind those messy camps, those raucous demonstrations, those cardboard signs and long conversations. Young activists have spoken to me about the extraordinary richness of their experiences at Occupy, and they call it love."

Global Political Crisis

After presenting this paper at the Collaborative Struggle Conference I was asked what I meant when I talked about love. In response I pointed out that the vast majority of books on the subject of love work hard to avoid giving clear definitions. According to Scott Peck love lacks clarity because it "is too large, too deep ever to be truly understood or measured or limited within the framework of words" and "our use of the word 'love' is so generalised and unspecific as to severely interfere with our understanding of love." None-the-less, when asked to produce a short response, I usually define love as the struggle to create, maintain and develop caring social relations. When we consider love as a struggle, and our struggles as love, it is important to think about how we can democratise love. Love can be hard work and women disproportionally carry the burden of 'labours of love'; the work of kinship, the maintenance of family and friendship networks and the organisation of material and emotional support and sociability. The ability to democratise and share caring labour can break down distinctions between the work of love and other forms of work, so that all work becomes the labour of love. The extension of love weakens the power of capital and its state forms, making loving easier, increasing collective human capacities for self-organisation and alternative sociality. This is an active struggle to build the capacity to love through communication, cooperation and collaboration in order to produce more love.

The current global political crisis reflects both the flourishing democratic struggles of millions of people as well as the rise of authoritarianism in response to these democratic struggles. The depth and

The Complicity of Feminism

The role of Western feminists in this ongoing history is, at best, mixed. Combatting the idea that this is all women can be, objects of rescue, is one of the central tenets of feminist politics and practice. In relation to these forms of violence feminists (particularly the 'second wave' feminists of the 1960s and 70s) have spoken out against a culture that denied these forms of violence, either claiming that they did not exist or seeing them as simply a normal part of women's sexual, married and working lives.

However, there are a number of problems with the role that sexual violence came to play in feminist politics, a role that it has continued to play since the 1980s. The first is that uniting around actual or potential victimisation has meant that feminism risks resurrecting old ideas of women as damsels in distress, requiring protection, rather than constructing new models of femininity built upon strength and ability. In immediate practical terms this meant a shift in feminist political practices in the 1970s and 1980s in countries such as the US and Australia, towards a politics that is increasingly focused around relying on the state, and particularly the criminal justice system, for protection. While there is much of value in rape law reform, seeking protection from the state continues to require women to enact a version of femininity based on ideals of passivity, chastity and victimhood. We see the effects of this in mainstream Western societies in the continued existence of victim-blaming, rape myths and the way in which sexual assault trials are infamous for treating victims as though they were criminals.

Almost from the inception of feminist campaigns against sexual violence black feminists in the US such as Angela Davis and bell hooks criticised the ways these campaigns tended to build upon existing racist myths of black men as rapists, and failed to adequately deal with the racial bias of the legal system. In the US, it remains true today that in the cases in which there is a black defendant and a white victim there is a disproportionately high chance of successful prosecution. These issues are exacerbated across national boundaries and by the legacy of colonialism, and the ongoing histories of fantasies of rescuing brown women discussed above. This is not to say that feminism is solely or even primarily a Western phenomenon but rather that effective and genuine alliances between feminists from the Global North and South have often been undermined by the power imbalances and legacies of colonialism, one of which is the use of the spectacle of brown women's suffering as a rationale for colonialism and neo-imperialism. As Hesford argued in the case of the former Yugoslavia, a feminist politics which requires non-Western women to be figures of suffering in need of Western protection does nothing to build a genuine politics of solidarity and neither does it provide the basis for social change. At its worst, this kind of politics enacts a feminist version of Spivak's fantasy, with all of its neo-colonial implications.

Solidarity

The alternative, however, for anyone committed to global justice, is not to disengage from questions of gendered

violence and oppression globally, although this can sometimes be posed as an alternative by progressive groups. Rather, it is the far more difficult task of enacting meaningful solidarity across the borders and boundaries of colonial and neo-colonial power relations, in a system where there is a real danger that attempts to combat gendered violence can inadvertently work to reinforce racial and gendered relations of power. This problematic of a global solidarity that does not simply reinforce the privileged position of white feminists relative to other women is perhaps the single most intractable problem that has confronted western feminists. However, attempts at solidarity around issues of gender have too often acted to silence the women that they are seeking to 'help', rather than aiding them in their struggles.

These difficulties are not easy to overcome and the fact that global solidarity remains an intractable problem within feminist politics suggests that there are fundamental issues to be resolved. The American political theorist Wendy Brown offers a way of thinking through, and potentially changing, this situation. In her book *States of Injury* she argues that feminism has historically sought to act from a position of moral righteousness rather than political contestation. From this perspective it is more appealing to speak on behalf of the figure of the suffering victim rather than to stand with those engaged in political struggle. Speaking from the standpoint of victimisation and suffering allows you to be position yourself as inherently good. But to speak only from this perspective is to evade accepting responsibility for change, and creating a vision of a new world, which is the task of politics. Ending suffering is always a piecemeal goal, addressing the preconditions which allow suffering is a far more complex question and it requires one to take responsibility for putting forward a vision of the world, and to take the risk that that vision could be wrong.

Politics, for Brown, is an inherently messy and contested domain. It requires one to abandon the safety of moral purity and instead engage in the difficult and contradictory processes of experimentation and change. Politics cannot be undertaken from the standpoint of victimhood but only by those who refuse to be defined by victimhood. It is also not a realm in which one can claim to act purely selflessly on behalf of others. Granting autonomy to others means also taking responsibility for our own. In other words, politics can be motivated by the desire to end suffering, of oneself or others, but it is always about reaching beyond that suffering.

Speaking on behalf of women's suffering runs very few risks. Engaging in politics with women as political agents is always a risky and complex endeavour. It means attempting to work with others across faultlines of race, class, national and religious divisions. A feminist politics of change must eschew simple reliance on states or the UN for protection. Instead, it means negotiating the terrain of capitalist and imperial power and recognising that sometimes our actions may, despite our best intentions, work to reinforce rather than subvert that power. But beyond the risks, what such a politics offers is the possibility of a world in which global politics is not built on the spectacle of women's suffering.

Collaborative communities

Along with the composition of democratic places, occasions and the development of experiments in self-organisation, the global revolts have demonstrated the power of collaborative communities of struggle. Although each of the movements has different focuses, they have all focused to a certain extent on each other. Many of those involved are in communication with each other; they have visited each other and sent each other messages of solidarity, while sharing their experiences, slogans, lessons, skills, resources, and the practices of encampment, occupation, encounter and popular assembly. Within the movements of revolt there is a deepening understanding that direct democracy creates new subjectivities and relationships and that the construction of times, spaces and events for connection and affinity are key activities. As we have seen, those in revolt do not confine themselves to narrow policy demands. Instead, they take aim at the underlying values of rampant greed and individualism that have created economic, financial and social crisis, while embodying—in highly visible actions—radically different ways to treat one another. They have demonstrated the capacity of people to stop doing what they usually do, to transform private space, private time and private property into community space, community time and community property.

The opportunity to experiment with new forms of politics and self-organisation enables people to experience their own personal agency and collective power, to construct and experience different social relationships. Those in struggle learn how to work with one another, to collectively produce and make things happen, building confidence by relying on each other and fostering their own initiative. Marina Sitrin describes such experiments in autonomy and direct democracy as "the new politics of affectivity" established on the basis of "solidarity and love". These are "affective in the sense of creating affection,

A widespread understanding that the game is rigged and corrupt beyond redemption, has resulted in a profound questioning and examination of how power, domination, and exploitation operate in the social relations of everyday life. Rather than just rising up against the powers that be or making demands on the elites, the movements in revolt have provided a multitude of suggestions about how to democratise our lives and confront inequalities. These suggestions for change are not only theories, slogans or demands, but the living practice of democratic struggles. Although it is common to consider these democratic practices pre-figurative, 'creating future society within the shell of the old', it is also important to recognise that democratic revolts immanently and continually challenge hierarchies, dictatorships and authoritarianism. We should appreciate the 'future societies' which already exist outside 'the shell of the old' and how those in revolt have attempted to create, as much as possible, the reality of democracy, through processes of becoming increasingly democratic. In the political communities constructed by those in struggle we see a common commitment not to win but to realise democracy, an understanding that democracy has to be enacted, not asked for, that it is "something you do, not something you have" (Katherine Ainger, http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/may/08/indignados-make-change-contagious) and that you learn democracy by struggling to create it.

Global revolt has produced new organisational forms, as a rejection of failed practices and strategies, and to avoid and bypass repressive institutions. The self-organisation of broad based pluralist networks involves a range of decentralised experiments in collective self-government and complex decision making procedures. For those who doubt the ability of diverse, fluid and dispersed democratic networks to make decisions and take powerful collective action, recent revolts have shown how movements can collaboratively organise formidable capacities and coalesce around common needs and desires. By creating horizontal connections and networks between different individuals, organisations, campaigns and movements, people can cohere in a manner where no person or sectional struggle is seen as necessarily more important than any other. In this way, collaborative activities can develop that are open to a diversity of practices and that rely on people's ability to self-organise and rule themselves. A multitudinous strategy can support the most democratic movement possible, one that provides people with the ability and confidence to be fully part of it, and a sense of their own power to create social change. This multiplicity of struggles can address the variety of domination, as well as the diversity of people's needs and desires.

An open letter to anarchists (and others) in Melbourne (and other places) who feel under attention from the state; or, "Please Don't Talk To The Cops"

Dear comrades,

First of all: you have our solidarity. We know that feeling surveilled and monitored can be a very real trauma, and we know that those feelings don't just disappear through the 'correct' political analysis or through macho bravado.

We have no interest in singling out anyone or any group for condemnation. However, these recent events, and the conversations around them, have emphasised to us the importance of creating a strong collective culture in which we refuse to speak with ASIO or the cops: no matter how innocent the circumstances might seem. Even when we're under pressure – and we're always under pressure – we need to be able to deal with debates and conflicts without creating unnecessary divisions between ourselves.

It's precisely because things don't seem to have gone too badly on this occasion when people chose to speak with ASIO that it's important to raise a critique of ever talking to them and to point out the dangers of becoming complacent around this. It seems necessary to re-iterate why 'don't talk' should be a general political principle.

We gain nothing; they gain something

There's no information we could gain from talking to the cops that is useful to us. In the first place, it is clear that we should not and cannot trust anything they say. Beyond this, what actual good does it do us to 'know' that they're monitoring this group or the other? Without being paranoid, we should always assume that they could be monitoring us, and this shouldn't change our behaviour. Whether or not we have particular signs of attention from the state, we should organise and communicate openly in the same ways, and we should be cautious in the same ways. From this perspective, getting confirmation or information from the state does not inform our practice in any useful way.

On the other hand, the cops could always gain something from any conversation with us. They are trained to question and to gather information. The information

that's useful to them isn't just the details of (non existent) secret plots: anything inadvertently disclosed about our relationships could be useful to them.

Collective refusal gives us more power and control

Ultimately we need to resist creating a situation in which it could be seen as normal, harmless or acceptable for individuals to talk to the police. The state tries to sow seeds of doubt and division. A key way they do this is to try to separate us out and target us as individuals. In this way they try to get us to say contradictory things, fabricate stories, and so on. The only real way to respond to this is to always be creating a strong political foundation in which we collectively refuse to speak with police.

We would like to think that refusing to speak with police after an arrest is a principle that most comrades already understand – though it's one that needs constant reiteration. As well as being sound legal advice, it is a political principle, because it gives us the best chance of working out a collective response to the immediacy of state repression. We think that it is just as crucial that this principle exists outside of arrest situations.

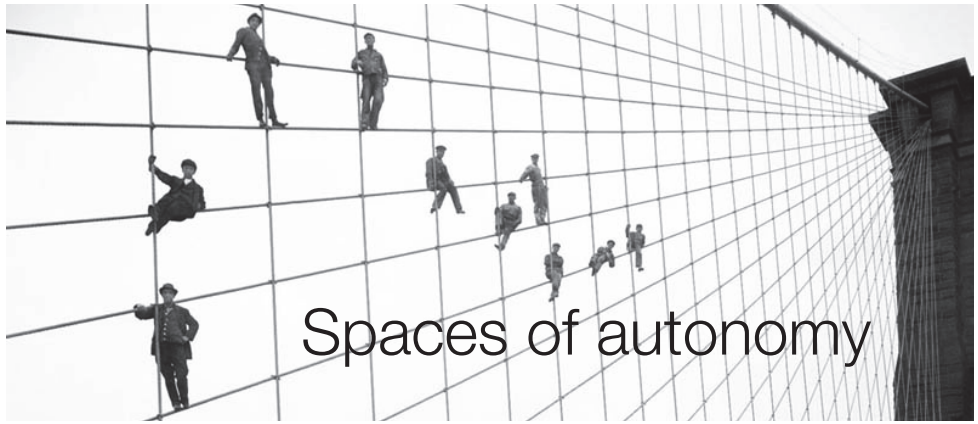
In writing this we draw from our own experience of being watched closely by the State, particularly in the period between the Melbourne G20 protest in 2006 and APEC in Sydney in 2007. We know that being approached for information by police or ASIO can be intimidating, and an individual's circumstances can make it more intimidating.

During this period people were followed out of pubs and cornered in dark streets by police. One person was asked to give information in exchange for having serious charges dropped. In such situations a collective culture of supporting each other in outright refusing to talk keeps us all stronger and safer and prevents anyone being targeted as an individual.

While we'd hope to have a movement in which we can trust comrades never to say anything stupid or dangerous, we are stronger if we collectively don't say anything at all. That way no one is singled out.

One thing we've noticed is that it's often uni students who are approached by police for information. Choosing to refuse to be singled out helps create a culture of solidarity where people's privileges and vulnerabilities are diffused amongst many comrades. No one should consider themselves in a position where they're secure enough to talk with police.

These spatial activities make it evident that democracy often requires a significant amount of time devoted to discussion and deciding common affairs. So, along with the creation of alternative spaces those in revolt have also refused the work of capital and experimented with alternative temporalities. In the past year we have seen a wave of strikes and other forms of work refusal, including general strikes in Tunisia, Egypt, Spain, Greece, Bangladesh, Slovenia, India, Portugal, Lebanon, Syria, Italy, Nepal, South Korea and Chile. Although these strikes were usually short-lived, the long-term encampments and occupations that swept the globe have lasted weeks and even months. In Syntagma and Tahrir Square, along Rothschild Boulevard and Wall Street, and in hundreds of other locations, once people gathered together they remained for as long as possible in order to take part in "extended moments of struggle . . . to take back their entire lives" (Vradis: 2011: 66). By freeing time and space from capital people experimented with unmediated control, advancing new social relations which are the basis for more widespread and powerful resistance and revolt. Taking time in this way is not only a refusal of work that is exploited, under-valued, oppressive and alienating, but helps to manifest alternative times dedicated to mutual aid, cooperation and collaboration. These temporal struggles and reconsiderations of the time of our lives open up questions about people's relationship to work and consumption, allowing them to interact differently, and to have more time for each other.



Spaces of autonomy

Despite their differences, the movements of revolt have shared tactics and strategies, including a collective civil disobedience that has constructed 'autonomous zones', by seizing and creating space for struggles that are not controlled or limited by previously established political apparatuses, in which a new democratic politics can be experimented with. Most obviously this has involved occupation, encampment and the formation of open and inclusive general, popular and neighbourhood assemblies for decision making. These occupations and democratic sites have enabled people of all kinds to coexist in public with likeminded strangers and acquaintances - one of the great foundations and experiences of democracy. Not surprisingly, many of these alternative areas have come under attack from mainstream media, politicians, police and armed forces, or have been recuperated. These attacks have helped clarify the difficulties of creating and defending democracy in isolation, and made the need for deeper and more widespread revolutionary change more apparent. The attempted creation of 'safe spaces' has been a crucial task for those in revolt. Learning how to help make each other safe has mostly involved negotiated processes which encourage shared responsibility and collective action, aiming not to eliminate conflict but to manage it. Although at times the defence of 'safe space' has required physical struggle to avoid, lessen and cope with offensive violence.

As part of the struggle to expand the spaces of democracy we have also seen escalating clashes over the control of cyberspace. Despite government attempts to police communications technology, social media has provided the infrastructure for democratic political activities and new forms of politics relatively free from state coercion. Social media and networking tools are being used to organise a swarm of decentralised and participatory activities, helping to co-coordinate transnational and multitudinous actions with minimal resources and without bureaucracy, as social media teams, outlets and networks continually broadcast their own version of events, promote actions, provide analysis and engage in intense debates.

If you are approached by police, ASIO, or anyone else after information, you should refuse to talk to them and tell other people what happened. You should tell your friends, close comrades and people you work with in collectives: but you should also make an effort to spread this information more widely – through our own channels, not through the press.

Some notes on the media

Even hipsters know not to

We think that we have to be very careful about dealing with the mainstream media. We don't think that the possibility of media attention is any justification for talking with police. Whilst it seems plausible, we're very sceptical of the idea that a newspaper article on the fact that your campaign group is under surveillance is any sort of strategy. We can imagine very few situations in which a story about anarchists – or any activists – being monitored by ASIO would be anything other than either:

1. a liberal story in which we were 'innocent' victims being pursued by the state, which should allow 'democratic dissent'; or
2. a beat up which presents us as 'terrorists' who deserve everything we get.

What do we gain from either of these presentations?

A further note on this particular situation: it's never ok to talk to the press about a comrade who is incommunicado, no matter how sympathetic the journo or how seemingly trivial the comment you give. It's never ok to do anything that will help the press build a story about a comrade who is choosing stay quiet and whose situation might well be made worse by publicity.

A conclusion

We live in a world with prisons, with police, with intelligence agencies. We need to get a grip on what this means when we oppose the state. We struggle against them; they aim to undermine and crush our attempts to make a new world.

We need to learn from history. There's a reason why 'don't talk to the cops' is a fundamental principle for radical movements. We've made mistakes too – we'd like to be able to learn from each others' mistakes, not make them again.

- love, some comrades in Sydney

Global Revolt and the Struggle for Democracy

Nick Southall

This article was originally a paper presented at the 'Collaborative Struggles' conference in Wollongong in September 2012 – eds. A fully referenced version is available at Mutiny's blog, and at Nick's blog revoltsnow.wordpress.com.

Since the Global Financial Crisis in 2008 we have seen widespread popular revolt that is evidence of a global political crisis. During the past eighteen months European anti-austerity movements occupied squares, universities and banks and launched a wave of general strikes. In North Africa, the Middle East and the Arabian peninsula - revolutions toppled dictatorships and uprisings destabilised authoritarian regimes. Launched in the United States, the Occupy movement transformed streets and parks all over the world in a challenge to the tyranny of finance capital. In Israel encampments and protests for economic and social justice erupted across the country, and in Japan a powerful anti-nuclear movement emerged after the Fukushima disaster, calling into question the ability of the state to protect the population. In South America, after a decade of radical upheaval from Argentina to Venezuela, Chilean students at universities and high schools organised strikes, boycotted classes and occupied buildings, plunging the government into perpetual crisis. To their north a powerful rebellion of Quebec students did the same. These are just some examples of the contemporary wave of revolt destabilising the global economic and political order.

This paper explores global revolt and the struggle for democracy by looking at these movements and the resulting experiments in direct and participatory democracy. In order to clarify the ideas and practices of those in revolt, I consider how democracy is organised as a common and immanent (something that is already existing in the material world – eds) political project and reflect on the creation of alternative spaces and times, as well as forms of democratic organisation. Since the conference for which this paper was written sought to emphasise collaboration I spend little time on the conflicts within the movements being discussed. Instead I investigate these movements as dynamic processes of social relations that, despite their diversity, recognise and respond to common concerns and common enemies. I also explore how the development of shared tactics, strategies and practices has unleashed the collective ability of people to organise democracy while producing alternative collaborative and affectionate communities.

'Democracy' and 'democratic' have always been contested terms and have a wide variety of definitions and uses. Faced with the corruption of modern representative democracy, today there are widespread attempts to reclaim the concept of democracy in its radical, utopian sense: the absolute democracy of "the rule of everyone by everyone" (Hardt and Negri). Of course, contemporary struggles for democracy are not identical and don't share the same social conditions. Yet, although the Arab Spring, Anti-austerity and Occupy movements tend to be rooted in specific local conditions, and ties between those involved in collaborative struggles are often tenuous, recent revolt has spread so widely due to a shared distrust of governments and corporations and a common belief in networks of freedom. Many in the movements see democracy as central, and challenge the anti-democratic power of existing institutions and processes. They refuse to be represented, direct powerful critiques against the structures of representative government and champion the inclusive and open involvement of direct democracy. As David Graeber explained, it was the refusal of the Occupy movement "to recognise the legitimacy of the existing political authorities by making demands of them; refusing to accept the legitimacy of the existing legal order by occupying a public space without asking for permission, refusing to elect leaders that could then be bribed or co-opted;" and assertion that the entire system was corrupt, that attracted millions of people to participate and had a majority of people declaring their sympathies.

Although a rejection of political parties and an emphasis on direct democracy and militancy infuse the movements of revolt, significant conflict has occurred around the issues of authority, accountability, representation, legitimacy, and collaboration with capital and its state forms. To try and achieve democracy involves wide ranging debates that occur online, in the streets, squares, campsites, occupied schools, universities and other workplaces. Some have demanded free and fair elections, while others reject the political system, instead advocating what they call 'real democracy'. For some the strikes, occupations and encampments are symbolic, highlighting inequality and inequity in the hope that the public will push for change. For others they are protests with demands for the powerful to implement. Yet, what is also common is a rejection of vertical, hierarchical government, and attempts to create horizontal democratic institutions. Consensus decision making and attempts to find common ground are the lifeblood of the general and popular assemblies. These assemblies do not expect or seek unity "but instead are constituted by a plural process that is open to conflicts and contradictions." (Hardt and Negri) The movements have also involved decentralised gatherings for people to get together and talk about their own particular interests. Anyone who wishes to participate can do so and all can have a voice in decisions. Consideration is given to the protection of minorities and the right to dissent from majority decisions is widely defended. Importantly, rather than just making demands of governments and corporations, or drawing up programs for the future, these movements have created alternative places, occasions and practices, where the struggle for democracy has become more clearly an immanent contestation of existing state forms. In order to further explore the immanent power of revolt I will now look at these alternative places, occasions and practices.